

MN Democrat Votes for Veterans and Vital Domestic Priorities in Emergency Spending Bill

Washington, D.C. – Congresswoman Betty McCollum (MN-04), who serves on the House Appropriations Subcommittee on State Department and Foreign Operations, today voted to invest in America during a House vote on the three amendments of H.R. 2642, the FY 2008 Emergency Supplemental Appropriations bill, and to oppose \$162 billion in additional funding for the Iraq War.

“Democrats are fighting to end the war responsibly, to reduce the debt burden on our children and grandchildren, and to reinvest in America’s future,” McCollum said. “More than 80% of Americans believe our country is on the wrong course, in large part due to the endless war in Iraq. It is time to end the Iraq War and reinvest in America and the real struggles confronting working families.”

To respond to the economic crisis facing American families, Congresswoman McCollum voted with Democrats to extend unemployment benefits for workers who have exhausted the 26 weeks of regular benefits. This extension will provide relief for the over 4 million Americans, including nearly 70,000 Minnesotans, who are struggling to find a job, and help to stimulate the economy in a cost-effective, fast-acting way. The U.S. economy has lost 260,000 jobs in the last four months, and 1.35 million workers have been unemployed longer than 26 weeks - All the result of absolute neglect to invest in America by the Bush Administration and Congressional Republicans.

In another important vote for domestic priorities, Congresswoman McCollum supported \$51.6 billions in funding for the new GI Bill, a significant investment in the Iraq and Afghanistan veterans who have served the nation.

“Our veterans are counting on us and it is past time we act to invest in their future. This new GI bill says thank you to Americans who have sacrificed for us and deserve our support,” McCollum said.

Sadly, the nation has lost more than 4,000 brave men and women, and another 15,000 have been seriously wounded, in a war regarded as the greatest foreign policy disaster in American history.

"I voted against continuing to fund the Iraq War as I have in the past. This war is not making America safer, but it is weakening our military capacity, exhausting our troops and undermining our nation's economic security," McCollum said.

To change the policy and mission in Iraq, Congresswoman McCollum supported the amendment to require redeployment out of Iraq by December 2009. This amendment also puts the Iraqis on notice that they must also invest in rebuilding Iraq, especially since they have amassed a significant budget surplus. It requires that Iraqis contribute to the cost of their reconstruction and requires that our military does not pay more for fuel than the Iraqis. As a result of the high cost for the Iraq War, America is seeing the conflict in Afghanistan grow more intense as the Taliban resurges.

"It is tragic that the Bush Administration's deception and failed policy in Iraq has taken the focus off of al-Qaeda and the Taliban. My support for the on-going U.S. effort in Afghanistan remains strong. I was in Afghanistan and Pakistan in March and the threats posed by the Taliban and other extremists on those countries are real," added McCollum.

The House voted on the three amendments today. The first amendment focused on funding for the Iraq and Afghanistan wars, the second on Iraq policy restrictions and the third on domestic and humanitarian priorities.

Congresswoman Betty McCollum (MN-4) serves on the House Appropriations Subcommittee on State Department and Foreign Operations and the Oversight and Government Reform Subcommittee on National Security and Foreign Affairs.